

Huge backlog causing delays in Liberty sets

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to questions about coins and medals.

Q—On Dec. 4 I ordered a Statue of Liberty three-coin set from the government. My check has long since cleared the bank, but I have not received the coins nor have I had any correspondence from the United States Mint. Do I have reason to be concerned?

C.W., Normal

A—Probably not. Processing has lagged because Uncle Sam received many more orders than expected late last year. Officials say they hope to mail all of the three-coin sets by late May. The fact that your check was cashed is a good sign that government clerks accepted the order.

Q—Many months ago you ran an item about rare Indian-head pennies. Could you repeat the information? Specifically, I'm interested in learning about coins dated 1899, 1903 and 1907 that my grandparents pulled out of circulation years ago. We have many other Indians in a bank vault.

T.A., Chicago

A—Those three dates are common among collectors; "good condition" specimens retail for about 70 cents each. The rarest Indian heads include coins minted between 1866 and 1872 [retail value of at least \$20 each if "good"]; the 1877 [\$200]; and the 1909 with an "S" [for San Francisco] mint mark on the tails side [\$100].

Q—The letters "D.G." appear near Queen Elizabeth's portrait on almost all of the Canadian coins we get in change. What do they mean?

W.R., Racine, Wis.

A—They are an abbreviation for "Dei Gratia," Latin for "by the grace of God." Modern-day British coins usually carry a legend such as "Elizabeth II Dei Gratia Regina F:D:" which means, "Elizabeth II by the grace of God queen [and] defender of the faith."

Questions about coins or currency? Send your letters to Roger Boye, The Arts, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply. Please allow at least three weeks for an answer.